

Claims

Please cancel Claims 15-17.

Please amend Claims 1, 11 and 25 as follows.

Please add Claims 32-34.

1. **(Currently Amended)** A seasoning system for coating a food product with seasoning, comprising:

a product tray supported on a base and driven to move the food product longitudinally along the tray;

a drive mechanism for driving the product tray;

a sensor ~~for sensing an upper level of product moving along the product tray and~~ producing a product feed rate signal functionally related to the volume of product being conveyed along the product tray; and

a seasoning supply unit for supplying seasoning to the product moved by the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

2. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the drive mechanism moves the product tray linearly in a slow forward/fast backward manner to slide the product along the product tray.

3. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 2, wherein the seasoning supply unit comprises:

a seasoning tray having an angled discharge edge for uniformly distributing a curtain of seasoning to the product.

4. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 3, wherein the seasoning tray is fixed to the product tray.

5. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 3, further comprising:

an angled deflector on an upstream portion of the seasoning tray for deflecting

product toward both a left side and a right side of the seasoning tray.

6. (Original) The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the seasoning supply unit further comprises an auger driven by an auger motor, the auger motor speed being controlled in response to the product feed rate signal.

7. (Original) The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, further comprising:

a proportional gate for adjusting the feed rate of product to the product tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

8. (Original) The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, further comprising:

a tumbler including a rotating drum having an inclined drum axis for tumbling the product and the seasoning.

9. (Original) The seasoning system as defined in Claim 8, further comprising:

a cross feed conveyor for receiving the product from the tumbler and outputting product to downstream equipment.

10. (Original) The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, further comprising:

another product tray for moving product longitudinally along the another product tray while a spray mechanism sprays a liquid on the product; and
another drive mechanism for driving the another product tray.

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11. ^{*Currently*} (Amended) The ~~tumble~~ seasoning system as defined in Claim 10, further comprising:

a rotating drum for rotating sprayed product; and

a tumbler drive motor for rotating the drum.

12. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 11, wherein the rotating drum moves linearly with the another product tray driven by the another drive mechanism.

13. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 11, further comprising:

a plastic material liner for fitting within the rotating drum.

14. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 13, wherein the plastic material liner includes a plurality of inwardly projecting ribs each having first and second flight surfaces for tumbling the rotating product as a function of the rotational direction of the tumbler drive motor.

15. **(Cancelled)**

16. **(Cancelled)**

17. **(Cancelled)**

18. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 16, wherein the seasoning unit further comprises:

an upper ramp surface for sliding the food product while coating a side of the food product; and a lower ramp surface for sliding the food product while coating an opposing side of the food product.

19. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 18, further comprising:

an upper seasoning tray for dropping season onto the upper ramp surface; and

a lower seasoning tray for dropping seasoning onto the lower ramp surface.

20. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, further comprising:

an operator input panel for inputting operator selected parameters; and
a computer for controlling movement of the product tray and thus the quantity of product moving along the product tray in response to the operator input signals.

21. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the sensor senses an upper level of the product moving along the product tray without contacting the product.

22. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, further comprising:

a second product tray for moving product longitudinally along the second product tray; and
a product deflector for inverting the product discharged from the product tray and input to the second product tray.

23. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 22, wherein the drive mechanism powers both the product tray and the second product tray, and the second product tray moves product longitudinally in a reverse direction from product movement provided by the product tray.

24. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 22, further comprising:

a first spray mechanism for spraying a first side of the product moving along the first product tray; and
a second spray mechanism for spraying an inverted side of the product moving along the second product tray.

25. **(Currently Amended)** A seasoning system for coating a food product with seasoning, comprising:

- a product tray driven to move the food product longitudinally along the tray;
- a drive mechanism for driving the product tray;
- a seasoning unit for applying a seasoning to the product moved by the product tray;
- a sensor for ~~sensing an upper level of product moving along the product tray~~ and producing a product feed rate signal functionally related to the volume of product being conveyed along the product tray; and
- a proportional gate for adjusting the feed rate of product to the tray in response to the product feed rate signal.

26. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 25, wherein the drive mechanism moves the product tray linearly in a slow forward/fast backward manner to slide the product along the product tray.

27. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 25, further comprising:

- a tumbler including a rotating drum having an inclined drum axis for tumbling the product and the seasoning.

28. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 27, further comprising:

- another product tray for moving product longitudinally along the another product tray while a spray mechanism sprays a liquid on the product.

29. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 25, further comprising:

- an operator input panel for inputting operator selected parameters; and
- a computer for controlling movement of the product tray in response to the

operator input signals.

30. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 25, further comprising:

a second product tray for moving product longitudinally along the second product tray; and

a product deflector of inverting the product discharged from the product tray and input to the second product tray.

31. **(Original)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 30, wherein the drive mechanism powers both the product tray and the second product tray, and the second product tray moves product longitudinally in a reverse direction from product movement provided by the product tray.

32. **(New)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 1, wherein the seasoning supply unit comprises:

a seasoning tray having a substantially planar floor with an angled discharge edge for uniformly distributing a curtain of seasoning to the product;

a drive mechanism for driving the seasoning tray to move the seasoning along the seasoning tray; and

the seasoning tray including a tray side on one side of the floor, the tray floor having a generally triangular configuration.

33. **(New)** The seasoning system as defined in Claim 32, further comprising:

a dispersion member positioned below the floor of the seasoning tray and secured thereto, such that seasoning drops from the angled discharge edge of the floor of the seasoning tray and engages the dispersion member then drops onto the product.

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34. (New) The seasoning system as defined in Claim 25, wherein the seasoning supply unit comprises:

a seasoning tray having a substantially planar floor with an angled discharge edge for uniformly distributing a curtain of seasoning to the product;

a drive mechanism for driving the seasoning tray to move the seasoning along the seasoning tray; and

the seasoning tray including a tray side on one side of the floor, the tray floor having a generally triangular configuration.